

15 May 1984

MONDALE ATTACKS U.S. POLICY IN CENTRAL AMERICA

BY ROBERT B. GUNNISON

SAN FRANCISCO

Walter Mondale said today President Reagan's Central American policy is a failure and that his rival, Gary Hart, is "unsteady and inconsistent" in foreign affairs.

"I predict that if Ronald Reagan is re-elected," Mondale said, "he will present the American people with a 'December surprise.'"

"His policies will continue to fail; and at some point after the election, American boys could well be fighting and dying in Central America."

"Today we have a president who shoots from the hip in foreign policy. I don't think we need yet another one in 1984," Mondale said.

In a speech prepared for delivery to the Northern California World Affairs Council, Mondale ripped Reagan for what he called "political tunnel vision" in Central America.

"He sees Cuban soldiers but not Salvadoran death squads," the former vice president said. "He sees Sandinistas blocking elections but not the generals blocking land reform."

"He sees what's wrong with guerrilla sabotage but not with CIA mining. He wants the approval or world opinion but not the judgment of the World Court."

Mondale said that if he were elected, he would withdraw American combat forces from Honduras and end covert aid aimed at Nicaragua.

The Minnesotan campaigned in California today while primaries were held in Nebraska and Oregon.

California, which will send the largest delegation to the Democratic National Convention, holds its primary in three weeks.

Mondale also revived his attack on Hart for his remarks during the Texas primary that the Iranian hostage crisis represented "days of shame" for America. "Senator Hart's record on the hostage crisis and a number of other key foreign policy issues is unsteady and inconsistent," Mondale said.

"Mr. Hart doesn't seem to realize that every word a president utters is recorded by our friends, noted by our enemies, analyzed by intelligence agencies, and relied upon by Congress and the American people."

"He doesn't seem to realize that one slip of a president's tongue could cause an international crisis."

Mondale's combative posture contrasted with his bantering style Monday night.

At a reception with political supporters, he joked that he wanted the contest for the Democratic presidential nomination to be a dragged-out affair.